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Viewing cable 07KINGSTON385, CONTRABAND ENFORCEMENT TEAM DISCUSSED WITH CUSTOMS

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07KINGSTON385	2007-03-20 15:16	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Kingston

Appears in these articles:

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20110601/lead/lead3.html>

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKG #0385/01 0791516
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 201516Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4498
INFO RUEAHLG/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 000385

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP (BOZZOLO) AND WHA/CAR (BUDDEN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2017

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: CONTRABAND ENFORCEMENT TEAM DISCUSSED WITH CUSTOMS
COMMISSIONER

REF: KINGSTON 309

Classified By: DCM JAMES T. HEG FOR REASONS 1.5(B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: Acting NAS Director (NASDIR) followed up earlier conversations with Assistant Commissioner Cecil Brown and Contraband Enforcement Team (CET) Director Karl McKen (reftel) by meeting with Commissioner of Customs Hector Jones on March 9. The purpose was to get the Commissioner's position on issues affecting the future of CET including the future location of their office, shortage of human resources, the Customs Services ability to maintain mobile x-ray machines that NAS plans to procure and the status of NAS-funded polygraphs. Jones failed to provide definitive responses on most of these issues. End Summary.

CET OFFICE LOCATION

12. (SBU) Last summer, Commissioner Jones told NASDIR that the building from which the CET currently operates would be destroyed (per plans by the Jamaica Port Authority) and they would be moved to Berth 11, which was being renovated. DHS personnel engaged in implementing the Container Security Initiative (CSI) would, he said, be co-located with CET in Berth 11. Recently, it came to NASDIR's attention that this was no longer the plan. The Port Authority apparently told Jones that Berth 11 should house all of Customs (not just CET) and the CSI personnel. There would be space for 77 personnel at that site.

13. (SBU) Jones advised, on March 9, that Berth 11 will not provide all the office space required by Customs. Therefore, he had decided to move some CET personnel into Berth 11, where the CSI people would operate. The balance, he said, will need to remain where they are. Jones stated that he had requested the Port Authority to renovate another building (which had been identified for destruction) for future use of all CET and CSI personnel. That building is currently occupied by Container Services, Ltd. and is referred to as the CSL building. According to Jones, the Port Authority agreed to let Customs lease CET's existing building for another year, pending renovation of the CSL building.

14. (C) The Commissioner explained that he wants CET and CSI to have a "sterile environment" in which to work. That, he said, would not be the case with Berth 11. Customs brokers and others from the private sector will be milling around Berth 11, since regular Customs is there as well. Comment: Jones' explanation for the change sounds good, but other sources have indicated that the Port Authority has not agreed to renovate the CSL building and still intends to destroy it.

It appears that Jones backed off on his earlier commitment regarding the CET in favor of insuring that regular Customs personnel are adequately accommodated. Post needs to clarify with the Port Authority of Jamaica whether CET will be allowed to stay where it is for another year and whether they really intend to renovate the CSL building for CET. End Comment.

STAFFING

15. (C) Leading up to the issue of a shortage in CET staffing, NASDIR pointed out that intelligence suggests that drug traffickers are focusing on transporting cocaine and marijuana by containers. For that reason, NASDIR said, the interdiction role of the CET has taken on increased importance. In addition, NASDIR pointed out that, between the Airport Interdiction Task Force (which should begin operating next week) and CSI, the demand for CET personnel had increased. Nonetheless, NASDIR cited the fact that around 12 authorized positions have not been filled for many months. It has been speculated, NASDIR suggested, that failure to attract qualified applicants could be attributed to a perception that CET jobs are higher-risk than those of regular customs. At the same time, the pay scale and benefits are the same for both. NASDIR asked if it would be possible for CET to get a special allowance in order to attract applicants. Jones said he did not think pay/benefits was the problem (although he offered no other explanation). He said CET people get to work lots of overtime, implying that was an economic incentive to apply for CET jobs. Jones concluded that he would consider the allowance.

¶6. (C) Comment: NASDIR confirmed with Brown that CET personnel are able to work overtime. However, Brown stated that has not attracted applicants. Based on information from other sources, it appears that Jones has no real intention of seriously considering a special allowance for CET personnel. His attitude on staffing, like his attitude about office space for CET, is one of indifference or worse. Morale is

low in CET thanks in large measure to Jones. And, perhaps that is a major factor in CET's inability to attract qualified applicants. End Comment.

MOBILE X-RAY MACHINES

In response to a request from CET last year, NAS plans to purchase two mobile x-ray machines (mounted on the back of vehicles). Jones was asked if Customs can give assurance that these machines/vehicles will be kept in good repair by Customs. He said Customs would fund a maintenance contract for them and issue guidelines for their use. Jones claimed he will get the money for this from the Customs budget. At the same time, he wondered whether the purchase cost included the first year's maintenance. NAS is looking into that, but, other than a warranty, it is not likely.

POLYGRAPHS

¶7. (C) NASDIR explained to the Commissioner that of seven CET people who were polygraphed last September, only two were deemed to have passed. Polygraphs, at that time, were in conjunction with forming the Airport Interdiction Task Force.

The Task Force will need six CET people. Another 21 are slated to be polygraphed the week of March 19. According to Jones, there was no problem in staffing the Task Force as four other CET personnel had passed polygraphs administered earlier by the Canadians. Comment: That is true, but most occupy sensitive positions within CET, some in Montego Bay. McKen would prefer to keep them where they are. End Comment.

¶8. (C) Going a step further, NASDIR also told Jones that CET Director Karl McKen had been polygraphed in January 2007 and that he had passed. But, NASDIR expressed concern about the fact that Lenworth Levers, who had been acting CET Director for the last four months of last year, failed the polygraph in September. While NASDIR said he realized that failing a polygraph did not constitute grounds for firing personnel, the Commissioner should give some thought about what to do with polygraph results. In the case of Levers, for example, NASDIR said we would find it very difficult to deal with him if he were to occupy the position of acting CET director again.

¶9. (C) Jones asked to get the polygraph results. NASDIR told him we would provide a list of names of persons polygraphed with a notation by each name as to whether they passed or failed. Comment: That should be provided to Jones by next week. It remains to be seen what if anything he intends to do with the information. Moving CET people who fail back into regular Customs will aggravate the staffing shortage in CET, which is another reason Jones needs to get off the dime and come up with a plan to attract applicants for CET positions. End Comment.

POSTSCRIPT

¶10. (C) On March 13, NASDIR met briefly with Mrs. Vinette Keene, Director General of the Tax Administration Directorate, and Jones' immediate supervisor. Although the purpose of the meeting was to reconfirm an interest on her part for training for some of her tax staff, NASDIR mentioned his meeting with Jones. Before he could get into a full discussion of that meeting, Keene proceeded to explain that she had a problem with Jones. She indicated that, last year, she decided that he must take leave from September into January. He resisted, and, according to Mrs. Keene he said, "people kill people for things like this." Keene said there was a witness to his threat against her. Jones did take the

leave, however. In the meantime, Keene filed a report with Deputy Police Commissioner Mark Shields. Shields passed the complaint to Les Green, who is another International Police Officer and heads Organized and Serious Crime. Keene said she had heard nothing back from Green on the matter. When it was time for Jones to return to work, Keene tried unsuccessfully to extend his leave for a couple more weeks. Her boss, Finance Secretary Colin Bullock, approved Jones' return to work even though she is the immediate supervisor. According to Keene, she at least expected Bullock to meet with the two of them in order to work things out. At minimum, Keene expected an apology from Jones for threatening her. She never got it. What is more, she claims she came under enormous pressure to leave Jones alone from several ministers of the government, including Minister of National Security Peter Phillips. At the conclusion of the meeting with Mrs. Keene, she asked if NASDIR would let Mark Shields know that she had never gotten a response from Les Green. Comment: According to Shields, Green attempted unsuccessfully to contact Keene by telephone. He said Green would try again. Shields also indicated there was considerable

political interest in protecting Jones. End Comment.

JOHNSON